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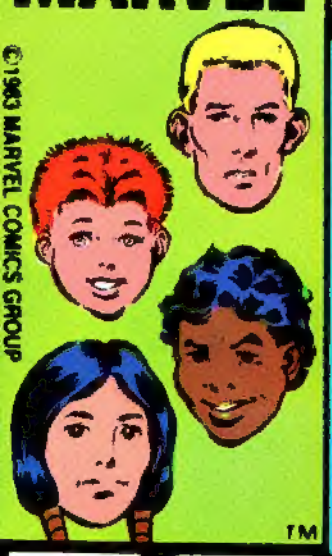

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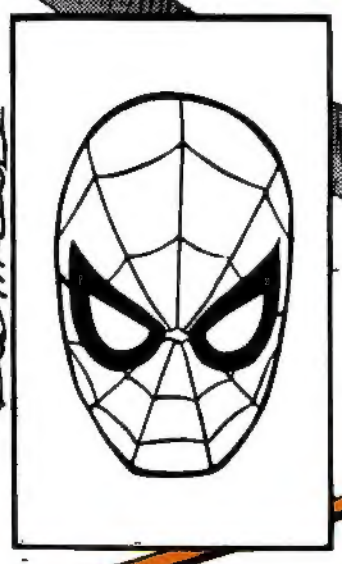
THE NEW MUTANTS™



Stan Lee PRESENTS
THE NEW MUTANTS
CREATED BY
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"BETRAYAL!"

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FOR AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE, THE STREETS ARE FULL OF PEOPLE-- THE AIR RESOUNDING WITH THEIR CHEERS-- AS THE TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION MAKES ITS WAY ACROSS THE SENATORIAL PLAZA OF THE CITY OF NOVA ROMA-- NEW ROME!

THE CAUSE OF THIS REJOICING? A 13-YEAR-OLD SCOTS WEREWOLF...

...ACCLAIMED, MUCH TO HER SURPRISE, AS THE LINEAL DESCENDENT BOTH OF JULIUS CAESAR (BECAUSE OF HIS RED HAIR) AND THE SACRED SHE-WOLF WHO SUCKLED ROMULUS AND REMUS, LEGENDARY FOUNDERS OF ANCIENT ROME.

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AGO, RAHNE SINCLAIR AND HER FELLOW NEW MUTANTS WERE IN THE ARENA, FACING DEATH OR A LIFE OF SLAVERY. TODAY, THEY'RE LIVING GODS.

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IT'S A TRANSITION THAT TAKES SOME GETTING USED TO.

AH FEEL LIKE AN IDIOT.

YOU RATHER BE BACK IN THE ARENA, SAM?

TRUTH T' TELL, DANI, I'D RATHER BE *HOME*.

WOULDN'T WE ALL, MY FRIEND.

LEADING THE PROCESSION IS THE MASTER OF THE CITY GUARD, SENATOR MARCUS DOMITIUS GALLIO...

I AM A *HERO*...

...THE MAN WHO BROUGHT TO ROME THE LIVING REPRESENTATION OF OUR MOST REVERED DEITY. THE MOB *LOVES* ME.

THE FOOLS! I SHALL TAKE THAT LOVE, THAT BELIEF IN ME, AND USE IT TO BREAK THE POWER OF THE SENATE... AND END THE REPUBLIC, FOREVER.

"I SHALL BE *EMPEROR*.

"AND NOT EVEN MY MOST BITTER ENEMY, MY FELLOW SENATOR, *LUCIUS ANTONIUS AQUILLA*, WILL BE ABLE TO STOP ME."

HEY, BOBBY, CATCH THE LOOK SENATOR GALLIO'S EXCHANGIN' WITH THAT FAT GUY ON THE STEPS. THOSE TWO GOT A HEAVY HATE GOIN'!

SO WHAT, SAM. IT IS NO CONCERN OF OURS.

IF MY MOTHER HAD SURVIVED THE RAPIDS, ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE MOUNTAINS THAT SHIELD ROME, PATROLS WOULD HAVE FOUND HER-- AS THEY DID US.

BUT THERE'S BEEN NO WORD, NO SIGN...

DANI'S LOOKING MY WAY. I MUSTN'T LET THE OTHERS SEE HOW UPSET I AM. DESPITE THESE CELEBRATIONS, I FEAR WE ARE FAR FROM SAFE-- FOR ALL OUR SAKES, I MUST BE STRONG.

ROBERTO'S THINKING ABOUT HIS MOM. I WANT TO HELP, BUT HE'S TOO BLASTED PROUD. HE WON'T LET ME.

WE'RE TOO MUCH ALIKE, HE AND I. MAYBE THAT'S WHY I CARE.

THIS PALACE IS YOURS. I TRUST YOU'LL FIND IT SUFFICIENT FOR YOUR NEEDS.

GUYS, THIS MAKES *PROFESSOR XAVIER'S* MANSION LOOK LIKE A *SHACK!*

HAVE YOU A ROBE, DANI? I'D LIKE T' STAND ON *TWO* FEET F'R A CHANGE, INSTEAD O' FOUR.

ENJOY THE PARADE, RAHNE?

IT WAS VERRA EXCITING. BUT THEY SHOULD NA' CALL ME A GODDESS...

...'TIS NA' PROPER.

BUT TO MY PEOPLE, CHILD, THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT YOU ARE. AND WHO IS TO SAY THEY ARE NOT RIGHT? PERHAPS THE GODS WERE BEINGS LIKE YOURSELVES...

...*MUTANTS*-- PEOPLE GIFTED WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS AND ABILITIES.

NO MORE PHILOSOPHY, HOWEVER. LET US TURN TO MORE TEMPORAL CONCERNS.

I'VE TAKEN THE LIBERTY OF ARRANGING SUPPER.

YOU'RE ALL -- SLAVES?

OF COURSE. YOURS TO COMMAND, YOUNG MASTERS.

MY FATHER WAS A SLAVE, WHEN HE WAS MY AGE.

IT SEEMS THE BEAUTY AND LUXURY WE ENJOY HAVE A PRICE.

CAREFUL, FELLAS, WE CAME PRETTY CLOSE TO WEARING CHAINS OURSELVES, REMEMBER? SENATOR GALLIO SAVED US...

... BUT HE COULD JUST AS EASILY CHANGE HIS MIND.

THE FEAST TASTES AS GOOD AS IT LOOKS. AND THERE'S VERY LITTLE LEFT BY THE TIME ITS OVER.

YOU'VE BEEN VERY KIND TO US, SENATOR.

NO LESS THAN YOU DESERVE, CHILD.

REALLY, SIR? AH SPOTTED ONE GENTLEMAN WHO DIDN'T SEEM ANY TOO HAPPY WHEN WE RODE BY.

I CAN GUESS WHO-- BUT YOU NEED NOT CONCERN YOURSELVES WITH MY ESTEEMED COLLEAGUE, SENATOR AQUILLA. I'LL DEAL WITH HIM.

AMARA'S DAD! AH THOUGHT AH NOTICED A RESEMBLANCE!

YOU TWO DON'T GET ALONG?

HARDLY.

I AM OF THE *PATRICIAN* CLASS, LAD-- THE NOBILITY-- BORN AND BRED TO UPHOLD THE IDEALS AND TRADITIONS THAT HAVE MADE ROME GREAT...

...CARETAKERS OF THE ETERNAL DREAM SHE REPRESENTS, GUARDIANS OF HER IMMORTAL SOUL.

AQUILLA IS *PLEBIAN*. NOW, MANY SENATORS ARE COMMONERS, SOME EVEN DESCENDED FROM SLAVES-- AND THEY SERVE AS HONORABLY AS ANY PATRICIAN.

NOT SO, LUCIUS ANTONIUS.

HE RESPECTS NO LAW BUT HIS OWN AND DESIRES NOTHING BUT POWER. TO ACHIEVE IT, HE WILL PAY ANY PRICE, MAKE ANY SACRIFICE.

IT IS RUMORED THAT HIS ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO NAME HIMSELF *EMPEROR*.

THE MAN TALKS REAL SLICK-- REMINDS ME O' THE COMP'NY REP READIN' MANAGEMENT'S OFFER T' DADDY AN' TH' OTHER MINERS AT CONTRACT TIME. EVERYTHING SOUNDED GREAT-- 'TIL YOU TOOK A CLOSE LOOK AT IT.

HE'S ALSO TREATIN' US LIKE KIDS. DANI'S PLAYIN' ALONG-- ACTIN' REAL P'LITE AND RESPECTFUL-- AH'LL FOLLOW HER LEAD.

GOSH, SIR-- THAT AIN'T WHAT AMARA TOLD US. SHE SAID HER FATHER LED THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE ANYTHING *SHE* SAYS, SAM GUTHRIE?!

SHE'S A LIAR AND A SNEAK!

∃HUH?!?∈

RAHNE, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?!

I'VE NEVER SEEN HER SO UPSET! SHE'S BEEN ON AMARA'S CASE FROM THE START--BUT WHY?! IS IT SOMETHING BETWEEN THE GIRLS...

...OR BETWEEN RAHNE AND SAM?

TUT, TUT, LITTLE ONE--YOU MUSTN'T JUDGE THE LADY AMARA SO HARSHLY. SHE IS A GOOD DAUGHTER, LOYAL TO HER FATHER...

...DOING WHATEVER SHE CAN TO HELP HIM.

YOU NOTICE, SHE WAS NOT BY YOUR SIDE IN THE ARENA--EVEN THOUGH SHE'D BEEN CAPTURED WITH YOU. SHE ESCAPED, BUT LEFT YOU TO YOUR FATE.

HARDLY THE ACT OF A FRIEND.

AYE, THA'S RIGHT! BUT THE NEW MUTANTS STAND BY *OUR* FRIENDS, SENATOR. SO IF YOU, OR ROME, SHOULD NEED OUR HELP, WHILE WE'RE YUIR GUESTS--

--Y' HAVE BUT TO ASK.

A NOBLE GESTURE, LADY RAHNE, AND MUCH APPRECIATED.

BUT I FORGET MY MANNERS. IT IS LATE AND THE DAY HAS, I'M SURE, TAKEN ITS TOLL ON YOU AS MUCH AS I.

I WILL KEEP YOU FROM YOUR BEDS NO LONGER. SLEEP WELL.

SAME TO YOU, SIR.

AT-- LAST!!

A THOUGHT TRANSFORMS ROBERTO Da COSTA--

--TO SUNSPOT, CHARGING HIS BODY WITH SOLAR-POWERED STRENGTH.

ANOTHER, A MOMENT LATER, RETURNS HIM TO NORMAL.

FORGIVE THE DISPLAY, BUT I COULDN'T BEAR THAT ARMOR A SECOND LONGER! HOW DO THESE ROMANS STAND IT, I WAS STIFLING IN THERE!

WAKE ME IN A WEEK, DANI-- PREFERABLY WITH A KISS.

YOU MIND TELLIN' ME WHAT THE HECK YOU'RE PLAYIN' AT, GIRL-- OFFERIN' OUR HELP T' GALLIO WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTIN' THE REST OF US?!

WHY SHOULDN'T I HAVE?!

'CAUSE WE'RE STRANGERS HERE, RAHNE, WE DON'T KNOW THE GOOD GUYS FROM THE BAD. YOUR CRAZY HATE FOR AMARA'S MAKIN' YOU ACT WITHOUT THINKIN'!

DO TELL?! AN' MAYBE TH' FACT THAT YOU *LIKE* HER IS MUCKIN' UP *YUIR* JUDGMENT, MR. HIGH-AN'-MIGHTY GUTHRIE!

BESIDES, WHO MADE *YOU* THE LEADER O' THE NEW MUTANTS?!

WHAT MAKES YUIR WORD GOSPEL?!!

YOU MIND YOUR ELDERS, GIRL, YOU HEAR ME!

I'LL DO NO SUCH THING...

...WHEN THOSE "ELDERS" ACT LIKE BABIES!

MUCH MORE OF THAT NONSENSE AND I'LL LOSE *MY* TEMPER. DANI'S BEEN TAKING CHARGE A LOT LATELY, I'LL LET HER SETTLE THIS.

I'M GOING FOR A WALK.

I MUST CONFESS, SHE'D MAKE A BETTER LEADER THAN I. I HAVEN'T THE PATIENCE. MY SOLUTION TO ANY ARGUMENT IS TO PUNCH SOMEONE...

DOES MY LORD REQUIRE ANYTHING?

NOTHING, THANK YOU.

I COULD EASE YOUR SADNESS, MASTER.

LEAVE ME, PLEASE. I JUST WANT TO BE ALONE.

DO MY FEELINGS SHOW SO MUCH? PERHAPS HURT AS DEEP AS MINE CANNOT BE HIDDEN?

OR DO I SECRETLY ENJOY FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF? SO MUCH HAS HAPPENED...

...SO MUCH OF IT, BAD.

"THE DAY MY MUTANT POWERS APPEARED, I BECAME AN OUTCAST. MY SCHOOL-MATES DESERTED ME, EXCEPT FOR *JULIANA SANDOVAL*. SHE STOOD BY ME, NO MATTER WHAT, AND I LOVED HER FOR IT.

"TO SAVE MY LIFE, SHE SACRIFICED HER OWN.

"AND THEN, LAST MONTH, IN CALIFORNIA, I TRIED TO SAVE *SHAN* AS WE ALL FELL INTO THE OCEAN.

"BUT I WAS TOO SLOW, TOO LATE.

"AS I WAS DAYS AGO, IN THE RIVER, WHEN OUR BOAT WAS WRECKED.* MY LOVE, MY TEAM-MATE...

"... MY *MOTHER*--

*SCENES COURTESY OF THE NEW MUTANTS GRAPHIC NOVEL, PLUS ISSUE #'s 6 & 8-- LOUISE.

-- DEAD BECAUSE OF ME.

WHAT GOOD IS MY ACCURSED POWER IF I CANNOT USE IT TO HELP THOSE I CARE FOR?!

I WISH MY *FATHER* WAS HERE.

WHEN WE'RE TOGETHER, WE TALK LIKE PALS, NOT FATHER AND SON. HE WOULD KNOW THE ANSWERS, HE ALWAYS DOES-- eh?!

WHAT'S THAT, IN THE PLAZA?!

BLESSED SAINTS-- IT'S *IMPOSSIBLE!*

"THAT WOMAN WITH *RED HAIR--*"

--IS SHE MY *MOTHER?!!*

DEAR LORD, LET IT BE HER.

LET HER BE ALIVE!

SHE WAS DRESSED AS A ROMAN. IF SHE'S BEEN FOUND, WHY HASN'T ANYONE TOLD US-- *EH?!!*

NO FURTHER, OUTLANDER.

STAND WHERE YOU ARE!

WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?! LET ME PASS!

WE CANNOT, WE HAVE OUR ORDERS-- FROM SENATOR GALLIO HIMSELF.

YOU ARE TO STAY WITHIN THE PALACE, FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION.

THERE ARE THOSE IN NOVA ROMA WHO WOULD DO YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS HARM-- *ulp!*

MOVE ASIDE, DECURION, BEFORE I SHOW YOU...

... JUST HOW WELL I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.

WHAT AM I DOING?! THREATENING AN INNOCENT MAN SIMPLY DOING HIS DUTY?!

IT GOES AGAINST THE MOST BASIC RULE TAUGHT US BY *PROFESSOR XAVIER:*

... THAT OUR POWERS MUST ONLY BE USED IN SELF-DEFENSE OR TO HELP SOMEONE, NEVER IN WANTON VIOLENCE.

THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE WOMAN, I'LL NEVER FIND HER IN THAT CROWD. I PROBABLY ONLY IMAGINED HER ANYWAY.

FORGIVE ME, DECURION. I WAS UPSET. I DID NOT MEAN TO LOSE MY TEMPER.

"IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN."

<THANK JUPITER FOR THAT!>

LATER THAT NIGHT...

...AT A SIDE ENTRANCE TO THE PALACE...

ONLY TWO GUARDS— THAT'S BETTER THAN I EXPECTED.

I CAN'T LET THEM SEE ME LEAVE...

"...SO LET'S SEE IF MY POWER TO CREATE ILLUSIONS...

"...CAN SUMMON AN APPROPRIATE REACTION FROM THEIR MINDS."

S- SILVIUS...

...DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?!

BY THE GODS, ARE THEY REAL?! AM I DREAMING?!?

WHO CARES!

THOSE GUYS LOOKED SO HAPPY-- AN' NO WONDER. I SHOWED 'EM THEIR HEART'S DESIRE. I FEEL KINDA LOUSY FOR FOOLING THEM.

BUT MY SPIRIT-FORMS DID THE TRICK. I'M OUTSIDE.

SINCE I'M INDIAN-- AND DRESSED IN THESE CLOTHES-- NO ONE SHOULD LOOK TWICE AT ME IN A CITY THAT'S HALF-INCA.

WITH ANY LUCK, I'LL BE ABLE TO FIND OUT NOVA ROMA'S REALLY LIKE--

GLMNPGH!

LATER STILL...

YOU PLAN TO SIT THERE ALL NIGHT?

DANI SHOULD HA' RETURNED HOURS AGO, ROBERTO. SOMETHING'S HAPPENED. WE NEVER SHOULD HA' LET HER GO BY HERSEL'.

SHE'S A VERY DETERMINED GIRL, RAHNE.

BUT DON'T YOU WORRY YOUR FUZZY LITTLE HEAD, FIRE-TOP. SHE CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF.

STOP THAT! IT TICKLES!

I'M ASHAMED, ROBERTO. 'TIS NA' DANI I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT--BUT MYSELF. I SAID SUCH HATEFUL THINGS T' SAM, T'DAY. I MEANT THEM, TOO.

AN' I BLASPHEMED AS WELL...

...NO MATTER HOW NEATLY SENATOR GALLIO TRIED TO EXPLAIN IT AWAY.

I WONDER SOMETIMES WHY GOD HASN'T ALREADY STRUCK ME DEAD. T' BURN IN HELL--FOREVER--OH, ROBERTO, I'M *SO AFRAID!*

RAHNE, WHAT THESE ROMANS BELIEVE IS THEIR BUSINESS. GOD CAN SEE INTO YOUR HEART AND SOUL.

IF *YOUR* BELIEFS AREN'T SHAKEN, THEN YOU'VE NOTHING TO FEAR.

BUT THAT'S JUST IT--*THEY ARE!*

ROBERTO, I *LIKE* BEING A WOLF MORE THAN BEING A GIRL--AN' I LIKE IT MORE AN' MORE EACH DAY!

WHAT CAN I SAY TO HER, HOW CAN I HELP--WHAT'S THAT?!

SOMETHING MOVING BEHIND THE DRAPES!

BLAM!

ROBERTO!

AIOWW!

HUH?! WHUZZAT?! WHAT'S GOIN' ON--

BOBBY!

SAM, HE'S BEEN SHOT!

HE AIN'T INVULNERABLE, EVEN AS SUNSPOT. A FALL FROM THIS HEIGHT'LL KILL HIM!

THERE HE IS! THIS IS GONNA BE CLOSE.

CAUGHT HIM!

BUT AH GOTTA GET BACK TO THE ROOM.

RAHNE'S IN THERE, ALONE, WITH THE KILLER!

GRRRRR

<WE HEARD CRIES OF ALARM, SENATOR-- HOUNDS OF HECATE!>

<OUR GUESTS MAY HAVE BEEN IN DANGER, CENTURION -- BUT THEY SEEM TO HAVE THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND.>

SENATOR GALLIO, WE NEED A DOCTOR!

I'M ALL RIGHT, SAM.

THAT AIN'T KETCHUP ON YOUR SHIRT, PAL. YOU'RE BLEEDIN' REAL BAD!

I DON'T CARE. LOOK AT OUR ASSASSIN!

IT'S *CASTRO*-- THE MAN WHO WRECKED OUR BOAT!

BECAUSE OF HIM, MY MOTHER MAY BE DEAD!

FEAR NOT, LAD. ROMAN JUSTICE WILL ENSURE ANSWERS FOR HIS CRIMES.

YOU CAME TO KILL THESE SACRED CHILDREN. WHO SENT YOU?!

SAVE YOUR BREATH, PIG! YOU'LL LEARN NOTHING FROM ME!

Oh, REALLY?

SUPPOSE WE LET YOU DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH ROBERTO. I'M SURE HE'D ENJOY THAT.

N-NO! HE'D TEAR ME TO PIECES! I'LL TALK! *I'LL TALK!*

IT WAS A SENATOR-- *LUCIUS AQUILLA!*

PROCEED TO THE SENATOR'S HOUSE, CENTURION --

--ARREST HIM!

AT ONCE, SIR!

ELSEWHERE...
MMMNNNHH

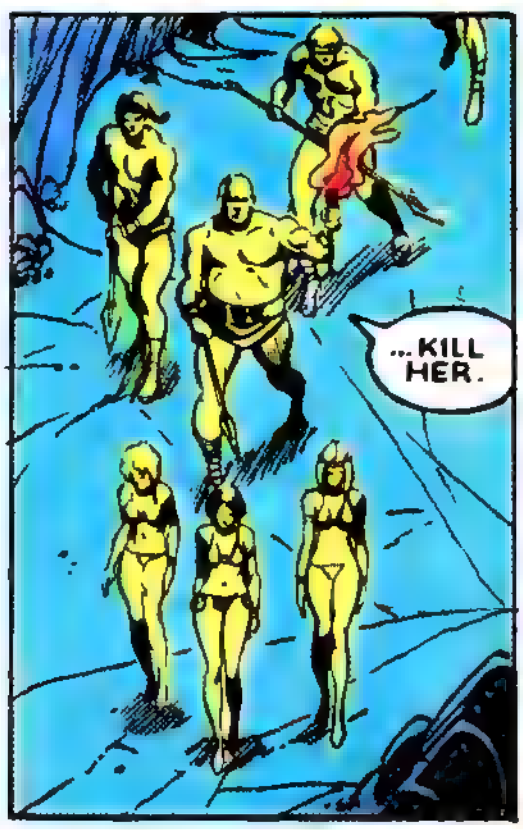
WHERE AM I... WHAT... HAPPENED...?
SO HARD... TO FOCUS MY THOUGHTS...

I REMEMBER-- SOMEBODY GRABBED ME-- I WAS DRUGGED!
Oh, BROTHER!
I BET I'M NOT DRESSED THIS WAY FOR A PARTY!

I'M IN A CAVE-- PRETTY BIG BY THE LOOK OF IT...
AMARA-- AND ANOTHER GIRL!

THEY'RE DRUGGED, TOO, AND IT'S AFFECTING THEM A LOT MORE THAN ME. MY MUTANT METABOLISM PROBABLY BURNED THE STUFF OUT OF MY SYSTEM FASTER THAN NORMAL.
AMARA, IT'S DANI. WHERE ARE WE?!
DON'T... KNOW.
WHY ARE WE HERE?!

TO BE SACRIFICED.
WATCH THE INDIAN, BRETHREN. AT THE SLIGHTEST MOVE...


...KILL HER.

I'M STILL TOO WOOZY. I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH CONTROL OVER MY SPIRIT-FORMS YET TO USE THEM AGAINST THE GUARDS. BUT IF I DON'T ACT SOON, IT'LL BE...
...TOO LATE.

BEHOLD THE SANCTUARY OF THE *CULT OF FIRE*, WHERE-- FOR THE GLORY OF OUR GODS--

--YOU WILL BE CONSIGNED TO THE ETERNAL FLAME!

THE GIRLS ARE TERRIFIED--SO AM I, BUT WHY SHOULD IT GET TO ME...

...UNLESS THE DRUG IS SOMEHOW HYPING MY EMOTIONS.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THAT PLATFORM?!

"SOMEONE'S MATERIALIZING!"

I AM *SELENE*...

...DAUGHTER OF THE MOON...

... MISTRESS OF THE FIRE.

COME, CHILDREN. GIVE YOURSELVES TO ME.

I JUST FELT A TUG IN MY MIND! SELENE MUST HAVE PSYCHIC POWERS, LIKE *PROFESSOR XAVIER*-- MY TRAINING IS HELPING ME RESIST.

BUT THE OTHERS DON'T HAVE A CHANCE!

YOU ARE YOUNG, YOUR LIFE-FORCE FULL AND PURE. THAT IS GOOD.

PLEASE...

... NO... !

I CAN'T LET THIS HAPPEN-- I'VE GOT TO SUMMON MY POWER-- oh, *NO!*

I'M TRYING, AS HARD AS I CAN--

-- BUT IT ISN'T WORKING!

"IT'S SELENE! SHE KNOWS WHAT I CAN DO AND SHE'S USING HER OWN PSIONIC ABILITIES TO BLOCK MINE!"

I DO YOU THE SUPREME HONOR, GIRL.

FOR WITH YOUR DEATH...

...YOU GIVE ME LIFE!

I AM, AFTER ALL, A GODDESS, WHO HAS WALKED THE EARTH SINCE BEFORE THE DAWN OF HISTORY.

COUNTLESS THOUSANDS HAVE GONE TO THE FIRE IN MY NAME.

WHICH OF YOU TWO...

...WILL BE THE NEXT?

MEANWHILE, AT THE AQUILLA ESTATE...

... PROTECTED BY A COHORT OF THE SENATOR'S PERSONAL GUARD...

WHAM!

ONE OF THE OUTLANDERS!

TO ARMS, COMRADES! WE ARE UNDER ATTACK!

YOU SURE ARE, MISTER!

CASTRO POPPIN' UP AN' FINGERIN' Mr. AQUILLA AS HIS BOSS WAS AWFULLY CONVENIENT-- 'SPECIALLY SINCE SENATOR GALLIO HAD HIS ARMY READY AN' SET TO GO AFTER HIM.

"EVENTS ARE MOVIN' TOO FAST. WE'RE BEIN' GIVEN NO TIME TO THINK THINGS THROUGH.

"BOBBY DON'T CARE-- HE JUST WANTS TO BUST HEADS AN' FIND DANI. SO DO I-- BUT AH WANT TO BE SURE THEY'RE THE *RIGHT* HEADS."

STAY BY MY SIDE, LADY RAHNE.

BUT THEY'RE MY TEAM-MATES! I SHOULD HELP THEM--!

THE RISK IS TOO GREAT. THE PEOPLE CONSIDER YOU THE LIVING HEART OF OUR CITY, CHILD. NO HARM MUST BEFALL YOU.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, SAM?! PUT ME DOWN!

THOSE ROMANS DON'T NEED NO HELP WITH THEIR BUTCHERIN', BOBBY.

YOU AN' ME HAVE GOTTA TALK--WHERE GALLIO CAN'T HEAR US.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!

MAYBE RAHNE'S RIGHT AN' AH'M LETTIN' AMARA GET TO ME. BUT AH DON'T TRUST GALLIO AN' AH SURE DON'T LIKE WHAT'S GOIN' DOWN.

WE CAN'T STOP AQUILLA'S BEIN' ARRESTED, BUT WE CAN MAKE SURE HE AIN'T KILLED-- "*ACCIDENTALLY*"-- IN THE FIGHT. HE DESERVES A FAIR TRIAL, IN A PROPER COURT. AH MEAN TO SEE HE GETS IT.

AGREED, MY FRIEND.

<THERE HE IS!>

<AYE, COME FOR ME, DOGS! I'M ONE MAN-- PAST HIS PRIME AND GONE TO SEED-->

<--WHAT HAVE YOU TO FEAR FROM ME?!>

YEURRGH*

<FORWARD, MEN! LORD GALLIO WANTS AQUILLA'S HEAD ON A PIKE!>

<IF SO, CENTURION, IT'LL COST HIM DEAR.>

<WHO DIES NEXT?!>

< BY THE ETERNAL--! >

MY APOLOGIES, SAM. IT LOOKS LIKE...

...YOU WERE RIGHT.

WE GOT THE MAN WE CAME FOR-- HIS SOLDIERS ARE BEATEN --THERE'S NO MORE NEED FOR BLOODSHED.

STAND ASIDE, BOY. HE'S OUR PRISONER.

WE TOOK HIM, WE KEEP HIM--

--LESS'N YOU WANT TO ARGUE THE POINT.

< DISAPPOINTED TO SEE ME STILL ALIVE, MARCUS? >

< CURSE THOSE INTERFERING YOUTHS! >

< NOT REALLY. YOU'LL BE DEAD SOON ENOUGH ONCE THE SENATE CONDEMNS YOU FOR HIGH TREASON. >

< THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING. >

< LIES AND FORGERIES! IT IS YOU WHO WOULD BETRAY US TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD-- WOULD SEE ROME DESTROYED-- SIMPLY TO FURTHER YOUR OWN AMBITION! >

< EVEN WERE THAT SO, THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO TO STOP ME. >

< YOU ARE BEATEN, AQUILLA. I HAVE WON. ROME IS MINE, TO DO WITH AS I PLEASE. >

< TAKE HIM AWAY. >

WORDS CANNOT EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE-- OR THAT OF ROME-- FOR THE SERVICE YOU HAVE DONE US BOTH THIS NIGHT.

GALLIO DOESN'T KNOW I SPEAK LATIN-- I'VE KEPT THAT SECRET SINCE WE ARRIVED, GAMBLING IT MIGHT BE USEFUL-- AND FROM WHAT I JUST HEARD...

...I THINK WE'VE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE.

I'VE GOT TO TELL SAM.

ELSEWHERE...
FROM THE MOMENT OF YOUR BIRTH, AMARA, I KNEW YOU WOULD SOMEDAY BE MINE...
...TO TAKE, AS I DID YOUR MOTHER.
YOUR FATHER HOPED TO SAVE YOU BY HIDING YOU AMONG THE *AMAZONS* --THOSE WHO'D FLED ROME TO ESCAPE MY CULT— BUT YOU ARE AS STUBBORN AND COURAGEOUS AS HE. YOU RETURNED TO HELP HIS CAUSE.
AS A REWARD...
...YOU WILL SHARE HIS FATE.
WHEN YOU PERISH AT MY HAND, SO WILL HE AT THE HAND OF MY HUSBAND, GALLIO. THE REPUBLIC WILL BE NO MORE. ALL YOUR HOPES AND DREAMS WILL BE DUST.
NO!
I DON'T CARE HOW STRONG SELENE IS, I CAN'T LET HER KILL ANYONE ELSE! I HAVE TO--
--BREAK FREE!
A SPIRIT-FORM OF THEIR GREATEST FEAR...
...SHOULD KEEP THE GOONS OFF MY BACK.
BOY, I WISH I HAD A RIFLE, OR MY BOW, ANY-THING TO DROP SELENE FROM A DISTANCE.
WHAT--?! YOU!!
I SURPRISED HER! SHE PROBABLY DIDN'T FIGURE *ANYONE* WAS HER EQUAL!

IF I CAN DISTRACT HER WITH A SPIRIT-FORM, I CAN SHOVE HER INTO THE LAVA--

URRRK!

YOU SHOULD HAVE FLED WHILE YOU HAD THE CHANCE, YOUNGLING.

I AM PROOF AGAINST YOUR MIND-TRICKS.

WE ARE KIN, YOU AND I-- OF THE SAME BLOOD--

--I SENSED IT THE MOMENT I SAW YOU IN THE ARENA.

NOW, I AM CERTAIN. FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS, I HAVE WANDERED THE EARTH ALONE, BELIEVING MYSELF TO BE UNIQUE-- A DIFFERENT, BETTER BREED THAN HUMAN.

YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS HAVE SHOWN ME THAT I AM *NOT* ALONE.

WHAT'S SHE SAYING--THAT SHE'S A *MUTANT?!* ARE WE SUCH... MONSTERS?! NO WONDER PEOPLE... FEAR... HATE US.

YOU WILL *ALL* JOIN ME, SERVE ME...

...HUNT BY MY SIDE, AS I LEAVE MY EXILE AND REACH OUT ACROSS THE WIDE, WONDERFUL WORLD--TO CLAIM IT AS MY OWN.

YOU RESIST TO NO AVAIL, MOONSTAR. I HAVE TASTED YOUR BLOOD, AND THROUGH IT...

...TOUCHED YOUR *SOUL*.

MURDERER!

DANIELLE PUT UP TOO GOOD A FIGHT! IT WEAKENED YOUR HOLD ON ME!

SO?

YOU ARE NO THREAT.

WITHOUT A SOUND, AMARA DISAPPEARS INTO THE LAVA POOL— BUT THEN, SUDDENLY...

ROBERTO, SAM-- WHAT'S HAPPENING?!

IT'S AN EARTH-QUAKE!

THE GROUND OFTEN SHAKES-- WE ARE USED TO IT-- BUT RARELY WITH SUCH VIOLENCE, AND NEVER WITHOUT WARNING. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?!

Bullpen Bulletins

HERE'S THE SITUATION...

I, Editor in Chief and Supreme High Kahuna of Marvel Comics, will be leaving very soon on a month-long trip around the country to attend several of the biggest Comics Conventions of the year. Every single one of the Editors here at Marvel will be going with me. That means no one will be here at the House of Ideas guarding the fort – *except the Assistant Editors!*

They will be in complete charge of one entire month's worth of Marvel Comics. For that month, they will be the absolute masters of the Marvel Universe.

And they're up to something! Something... strange.

This is no gag. No joke. Really, honestly, I thought it would be good for our assistant editors to have a real chance on the firing line – to have a shot at wielding the enormous responsibility and power of being editors-for-a-month under actual combat conditions – so I arranged it. Somewhat to my amazement, they're taking it *very seriously!* They see this as their opportunity not to merely caretake the comics for a month, but to do the stories they've always wanted to do! To oversee a month's worth of the wildest, most spectacular, most unforgettable and possibly weirdest Marvel Comics ever published! To *prove* themselves by knocking the world on its ear with every single issue coming out that month!

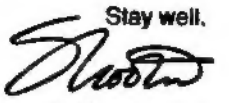
What month? *Next* month. All Marvel Comics which bear a *January* cover date, which will be on sale next month, in *September*, are the ones to watch for.

The Assistant Editors have been very secretive about what they have planned, so I can't tell you anything about next month's stories – I honestly don't *know* what they've got cooking. I firmly believe that these issues are going to be one-of-a-kind collector's items, though, and if I were you, I wouldn't miss *any* of next month's issues. I don't say that lightly, by the way. If you read this column regularly, you know that I don't hard-sell anything, and rarely even give a plug. I leave the hype for the Hype Box. This is an unusual circumstance, though, I think. Assistant Editors Month has really grown from an innocent little educational exercise into an *event!*

Okay, enough about that. You've been advised – or *warned*, depending upon how you look at it.

By the way, Editor Mark Gruenwald's assistant Mike Carlin asked me to run the ad which appears below. So there it is!

Stay well,



P.S. Being that I'll be away for a month, the next Bullpen Page will be written by *my* assistant-and-secretary, Lynn Cohen! I'll be back writing this, the most-widely-read page in comics the following month! See you!

MARVEL'S EDITORS ARE GOING AWAY FOR A WHOLE MONTH SO GUESS WHO'S EDITING THE MARVEL COMICS COMING OUT IN SEPTEMBER?
CHOKE! NO! NOT THEM! NOT THEM!!
YES... THEM! DAWN OF THE ASSISTANT EDITORS!

THE HYPE BOX

MAGIK (Storm and Illyana Limited Series) #1 — Attention X-MEN lovers! This is the one you've been waiting for! The most bizarre Limited Series you'll ever read, as **Storm, Kitty Pryde, Nightcrawler**, and Colossus' sister, **Illyana Rasputin**, are trapped in the demon-lord **Belasco's** dark dimension! It's written by CHRIS CLAREMONT, with art by JOHN BUSCEMA and TOM PALMER. We predict it's gonna be the most talked about Limited Series since **Wolverine's**! How can you resist?

KA-ZAR #29 — Could there be a better place to hold a wedding than the beautiful and exotic land of Pangea? Well, yes. Virtually *anyplace*, if you don't want to be interrupted by the hell-spawn **Belasco**! (He *does* get around, doesn't he?) Are those wedding bells we hear tolling for **Ka-Zar** and **Shanna**, or funeral bells? A special double-seized spectacular brought to you by MIKE CARLIN, RON FRENZ, and ARMANDO GIL. And, for one issue only, it's available at newsstands as well as comics specialty shops, so there's no excuse for missing this one!

X-MEN #176 — You got a small taste of his work last issue, but here's the real thing: the eagerly anticipated pencils of the X-MEN's newest artist, JOHN ROMITA JR! That's right, Marvel's hottest young talent tackles Marvel's favorite team book. Along with writer CHRIS CLAREMONT and inker BOB WIACEK, he brings you an incredible story of giant squids and a honeymoon in outer space. Destined to be a milestone!

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

- ☐ **THE THING #6**
- ☐ **DAREDEVIL #201**
- ☐ **NEW MUTANTS #10**
- ☐ **STAR WARS #78**
- ☐ **DEFENDERS #126**
- ☐ **RETURN OF THE JEDI #3 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **THE FALCON #2 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **KA-ZAR #29**
- ☐ **RED SONJA #3 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **KULL THE CONQUEROR #3 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **MOON KNIGHT SPECIAL EDITION #2 (Limited Series)** – More sensational reprints of the original **Moon Knight** epics, from **The Hulk Magazine.**
- ☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #247**
- ☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #288**
- ☐ **THOR #338**
- ☐ **INDIANA JONES #12**
- ☐ **DR. STRANGE #62**
- ☐ **HAWKEYE #4 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **MAGIK (Storm and Illyana Limited Series) #1** – See Hype Box.
- ☐ **U.S. 1 #7 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **S.H.I.E.L.D. Special Edition #1** – First of two issues reprinting the classic **Steranko** *S.H.I.E.L.D.* stories.
- ☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #290**
- ☐ **AVENGERS #238**
- ☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #153**
- ☐ **MARVEL TALES #158** — Reprinting **Amazing Spider-Man #20** by STAN LEE and STEVE DITKO, "The Coming of the Scorpion."
- ☐ **ROM #49**
- ☐ **X-MEN #176**
- ☐ **POWER MAN/IRON FIST #100**
- ☐ **G.I. JOE #18**
- ☐ **CLOAK & DAGGER #3 (Limited Series)**
- ☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #261**
- ☐ **MARVEL TEAM-UP #136** — Spider-Man and Wonder Man
- ☐ **IRON MAN #177**
- ☐ **PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #85**
- ☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #5**
- ☐ **THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE #12**
- ☐ **WHAT IF #42**
- ☐ **KRULL #2 (Limited Series)** – The concluding chapter of Marvel's adaptation of the Columbia Pictures space fantasy smash!
- ☐ **X-MEN CLASSICS #1 (Limited Series)** – Re-presenting the history making ROY THOMAS/NEAL ADAMS **X-Men** adventures!
- ☐ **MICRONAUTS SPECIAL EDITION #1 (Limited Series)** – First of six issues reprinting BILL MANTLO and MICHAEL GOLDEN's classic early **Micronauts** sagas.
- ☐ **THE PUNISHER #1 (Limited Edition)** – Reprinting, for the first time in color, some of **the Punisher's** first, most explosive adventures.

MARVEL ANNUALS

- ☐ **STAR WARS ANNUAL #3 — Darth Vader** finds a disciple eager to learn the ways of the force. By JO DUFFY and KLAUS JANSON.
- ☐ **SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #17** – Peter Parker's High School reunion. By ROGER STERN, BILL MANTLO and ED HANNIGAN.

MARVEL MAGAZINES

- ☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #94**
- ☐ **MARVEL AGE #9**

EPIC COMICS

- ☐ **EPIC ILLUSTRATED #20**
- ☐ **COYOTE #4**
- ☐ **DREADSTAR ANNUAL #1** – For the first time in full color – JIM STARLIN'S "The Price."

AND IN SELENE'S CAVE...

BEHOLD YOUR FOLLY, DEMON, AND YOUR *DOOM!*

THE CHILD YOU THOUGHT SLAIN HAS BEEN *REBORN*-- MADE ONE WITH THE MOLTEN HEART OF THE EARTH ITSELF-- AND IN THE NAME OF YOUR COUNTLESS VICTIMS...

...SHE WILL HAVE *VENGEANCE!*

NEXT:

MAGMA!

MINUTEMEN

Quick STOP

RST